

UNITED NATIONS

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Press Release CG/1353
24 October 1962

STATEMENT MADE BY ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL U THANT
BEFORE SECURITY COUNCIL, 24 OCTOBER 1962

Mr. President,

Today the United Nations faces a moment of grave responsibility. What is at stake is not just the interests of the parties directly involved, nor just the interests of all Member States, but the very fate of mankind. If today the United Nations should prove itself ineffective, it may have proved itself so for all time.

In the circumstances, not only as Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations but as a human being, I would be failing in my duty if I did not express my profound hope and conviction that moderation, self-restraint and good sense will prevail over all other considerations. In this situation, where the very existence of mankind is in the balance, I derive some consolation from the fact that there is some common ground in the resolutions introduced in the Council. Irrespective of the fate of those resolutions, that common ground remains. It calls for urgent negotiations between the parties directly involved, though, as I said earlier, the rest of the world is also an interested party. In this context I cannot help expressing the view that some of the measures proposed or taken, which the Council is called upon to approve, are very unusual, and I might say even extraordinary, except in wartime.

At the request of the Permanent Representatives of a large number of Member Governments, who have discussed the matter amongst themselves and with me, I have sent, through the Permanent Representatives of the two Governments, the following identically worded message to the President of the United States of America and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR:

"I have been asked by the Permanent Representatives of a large number of Member Governments of the United Nations to address an urgent appeal to you in the present critical situation. These Representatives feel that in the interest of international peace and security all concerned should refrain from any action which may aggravate the situation and bring with it the risk of war. In their view it is important that time should be given to enable the parties concerned to get together with a view to resolving the present crisis peacefully and normalizing the situation in the Caribbean.

(more)

This involves on the one hand the voluntary suspension of all arms shipments to Cuba, and also the voluntary suspension of the quarantine measures involving the searching of ships bound for Cuba. I believe that such voluntary suspension for a period of one to three weeks will greatly ease the situation and give time to the parties concerned to meet and discuss with a view to finding a peaceful solution of the problem. In this context I shall gladly make myself available to all parties for whatever services I may be able to perform. I urgently appeal to Your Excellency to give immediate consideration to this message. I have sent an identical message to the President of the United States of America."

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR."

I should also like to take this occasion to address an urgent appeal to the President and the Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba. Yesterday Ambassador Garcia-Inchaustegui of Cuba recalled the words of his President, words which were uttered from the rostrum of the General Assembly just over two weeks ago, and I quote:

"Were the United States able to give us proof, by word and deed, that it would not carry out aggression against our country, then, we declare solemnly before you here and now, our weapons would be unnecessary and our army redundant."

Here again I feel that on the basis of discussion, some common ground may be found through which a way may be traced out of the present impasse. I believe it would also contribute greatly to the same end if the construction and development of major military facilities and installations in Cuba could be suspended during the period of negotiations.

Mr. President, I now make a most solemn appeal to the parties concerned to enter into negotiations immediately, even this night, if possible, irrespective of any other procedures which may be available or which could be invoked.

I realize that if my appeal is heeded, the first subject to be discussed will be the modalities, and that all parties concerned will have to agree to comply with those responsibilities which fall on them before any agreement as a whole could become effective. I hope, however, that the need for such discussion will not deter the parties concerned from undertaking these discussions. In my view it would be short-sighted for the parties concerned to seek assurances on the end result before the negotiations have even begun.

I have stated in my message to both the President of the United States of America and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR that I shall gladly make myself available to all parties for whatever services I may be able to perform. I repeat that pledge now.

(more)

During the seventeen years that have passed since the end of World War II, there has never been a more dangerous or closer confrontation of the major powers. At a time when the danger to world peace was less immediate, or so it appears by comparison, my distinguished predecessor said:

"The principles of the Charter are, by far, greater than the Organization in which they are embodied, and the aims which they are to safeguard are holier than the policies of any single nation or people." He went on to say: "The discretion and impartiality...imposed on the Secretary-General by the character of his immediate task may not degenerate into a policy of expediency...A Secretary-General cannot serve on any other assumption than that -- within the necessary limits of human frailty and honest differences of opinion -- all Member Nations honour their pledge to observe all articles of the Charter..."

It is after considerable deliberation that I have decided to send the two messages to which I have referred earlier, and likewise I have decided to make this brief intervention tonight before the Security Council including the appeal to the President and Prime Minister of Cuba.

I hope that at this moment, not only in the Council Chamber but in the world outside, good sense and understanding will be placed above the anger of the moment or the pride of nations. The path of negotiation and compromise is the only course by which the peace of the world can be secured at this critical moment.

Mr. President, I thank you.

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DRAFT FOLLOWS

Mr. President,

Today the United Nations faces a moment of grave responsibility. What is at stake is not just the interests of the parties directly involved, nor just the interests of all Member States, but the very fate of mankind. If today the United Nations should prove itself ineffective, it ~~would~~ have proved itself so for all time.

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In their view it is important that time should be given to enable the parties concerned to get together with a view to resolving the present crisis peacefully and normalizing the situation in the Caribbean. This involves on the one hand the voluntary suspension of all arms shipments to Cuba, and also the voluntary suspension of the quarantine measures involving the searching of ships bound for Cuba. I believe that such voluntary suspension for a period of two to three weeks will greatly ease the situation and give time to the parties concerned to meet and discuss with a view to finding a peaceful solution of the problem. In this context I shall gladly make myself available to all parties for whatever services I may be able to perform. I urgently appeal to Your Excellency to give immediate consideration to this message. I have sent an identical message to the President of the United States of America." Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR."

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~~I hope that at this moment, not only in the Council Chamber but in the world outside, good sense and understanding will be placed above the anger of the moment or the priority of matters.~~

~~The path of negotiation and compromise is the only source by which the peace of the world can be maintained on this critical~~

~~moment.~~ During the seventeen years that have passed since the end of World War II, there has never been a more dangerous or closer confrontation of the major powers. At a time when the danger to world peace was less immediate, or so it appears by comparison, my distinguished predecessor said,

"The principles of the Charter are, by far, greater than the Organization in which they are embodied, and the aims which they are to safeguard are holier than the policies of any single nation or people." He went on to say, "The discretion and impartiality ... imposed on the Secretary-General by the character of his immediate task, may not degenerate into a policy of expediency ... A Secretary-General cannot serve on any other assumption than that - within the necessary limits of human frailty and honest differences of opinion - all Member Nations

honour their pledge to observe all articles of the Charter ..."

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Mr. President, I thank you.

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URGENT TELEGRAM

Department of State

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Control: 17982

Rec'd: October 25, 1962
12:48 a.m.

FROM: NEW YORK

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1449, OCTOBER 24, 12 A.M.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, A/CDC/AR

DATE 5/19/88

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PRIORITY

EMERGENCY SC ON CUBA

FOL IS TEXT U THANT'S STATEMENT MADE EVENING 24 OCT IN SC:

MR. PRESIDENT,

TODAY THE UNITED NATIONS FACES A MOMENT OF GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY. WHAT IS AT STAKE IS NOT JUST THE INTERESTS OF THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED, NOR JUST THE INTERESTS OF ALL MEMBER STATES, BUT THE VERY FATE OF MANKIND. IF TODAY THE UNITED NATIONS SHOULD PROVE ITSELF INEFFECTIVE, IT MAY HAVE PROVED ITSELF SO FOR ALL TIME.

IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, NOT ONLY AS ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS BUT AS A HUMAN BEING, I WOULD BE FAILING IN MY DUTY IF I DID NOT EXPRESS MY PROFOUND HOPE AND CONVICTION THAT MODERATION, SELF-RESTRAINT AND GOOD SENSE WILL PREVAIL OVER ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. IN THIS SITUATION, WHERE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF MANKIND IS IN THE BALANCE, I DERIVE SOME CONSOLATION FROM THE FACT THAT THERE IS SOME COMMON GROUND IN THE RESOLUTIONS INTRODUCED IN THE COUNCIL. IRRESPECTIVE OF THE FATE OF THOSE RESOLUTIONS, THAT COMMON GROUND REMAINS. IT CALLS FOR URGENT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED, THOUGH, AS I SAID EARLIER, THE REST OF THE WORLD IS ALSO AN INTERESTED PARTY. IN THIS CONTEXT I CANNOT HELP EXPRESSING THE VIEW THAT SOME OF THE MEASURES PROPOSED OR TAKEN, WHICH THE COUNCIL IS CALLED UPON TO APPROVE, ARE VERY UNUSUAL, AND I MIGHT SAY EVEN EXTRAORDINARY, EXCEPT IN WARTIME.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES OF A LARGE NUMBER OF MEMBER GOVERNMENTS, WHO HAVE DISCUSSED THE MATTER AMONGST THEMSELVES AND WITH ME, I HAVE SENT, THROUGH THE

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-2- 1449, OCTOBER 24, 12 A.M., FROM NEW YORK

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, THE FOLLOWING IDENTICALLY WORDED MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR:

"I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES OF A LARGE NUMBER OF MEMBER GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO ADDRESS AN URGENT APPEAL TO YOU IN THE PRESENT CRITICAL SITUATION. THESE REPRESENTATIVES FEEL THAT IN THE INTEREST OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY ALL CONCERNED SHOULD REFRAIN FROM ANY ACTION WHICH MAY AGGRAVATE THE SITUATION AND BRING WITH IT THE RISK OF WAR. IN THEIR VIEW IT IS IMPORTANT THAT TIME SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ENABLE THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO GET TOGETHER WITH A VIEW TO RESOLVING THE PRESENT CRISIS PEACEFULLY AND NORMALIZING THE SITUATION IN THE CARIBBEAN. THIS INVOLVES ON THE ONE HAND THE VOLUNTARY SUSPENSION OF ALL ARMS SHIPMENTS TO CUBA, AND ALSO THE VOLUNTARY SUSPENSION OF THE QUARANTINE MEASURES INVOLVING THE SEARCHING OF SHIPS BOUND FOR CUBA. I BELIEVE THAT SUCH VOLUNTARY SUSPENSION FOR A PERIOD OF TWO TO THREE WEEKS WILL GREATLY EASE THE SITUATION AND GIVE TIME TO THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO MEET AND DISCUSS WITH A VIEW TO FINDING A PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. IN THIS CONTEXT I SHALL GLADLY MAKE MYSELF AVAILABLE TO ALL PARTIES FOR WHATEVER SERVICES I MAY BE ABLE TO PERFORM. I URGENTLY APPEAL TO YOUR EXCELLENCY TO GIVE IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION TO THIS MESSAGE. I HAVE SENT AN IDENTICAL MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA."

CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR."

I SHOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THIS OCCASION TO ADDRESS AN URGENT APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF CUBA. YESTERDAY AMBASSADOR GARCIA-INCHAUSTEGUI OF CUBA RECALLED THE WORDS OF HIS PRESIDENT, WORDS WHICH WERE UTTERED FROM THE ROSTRUM OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY JUST OVER TWO WEEKS AGO, AND-I QUOTE:

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"WERE THE UNITED STATES ABLE TO GIVE US PROOF, BY WORD AND DEED, THAT IT WOULD NOT CARRY OUT AGGRESSION AGAINST OUR COUNTRY, THEN, WE DECLARE SOLEMNLY BEFORE YOU HERE AND NOW, OUR WEAPONS WOULD BE UNNECESSARY AND OUR ARMY REDUNDANT."

HERE AGAIN I FEEL THAT ON THE BASIS OF DISCUSSION, SOME COMMON GROUND MAY BE FOUND THROUGH WHICH A WAY MAY BE TRACED OUT OF THE PRESENT IMPASSE. I BELIEVE IT WOULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO THE SAME END IF THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR MILITARY FACILITIES AND INSTALLATIONS IN CUBA WOULD BE SUSPENDED DURING THE PERIOD OF NEGOTIATIONS.

MR. PRESIDENT, I NOW MAKE A MOST SOLEMN APPEAL THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS IMMEDIATELY, EVEN THIS NIGHT, IF POSSIBLE, IRRESPECTIVE OF ANY OTHER PROCEDURES WHICH MAY BE AVAILABLE OR WHICH COULD BE INVOKED.

I REALIZE THAT IF MY APPEAL IS HEEDED, THE FIRST SUBJECT TO BE DISCUSSED WILL BE THE MODALITIES, AND THAT ALL PARTIES CONCERNED WILL HAVE TO AGREE TO COMPLY WITH THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH FALL ON THEM BEFORE ANY AGREEMENT AS A WHOLE COULD BECOME EFFECTIVE. I HOPE, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEED FOR SUCH DISCUSSION WILL NOT DETER THE PARTIES CONCERNED FROM UNDERTAKING THESE DISCUSSIONS. IN MY VIEW IT WOULD BE SHORT-SIGHTED FOR THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO SEEK ASSURANCES ON THE END RESULT BEFORE THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE EVEN BEGUN.

I HAVE STATED IN MY MESSAGE TO BOTH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR THAT I SHALL GLADLY MAKE MYSELF AVAILABLE TO ALL PARTIES FOR WHATEVER SERVICES I MAY BE ABLE TO PERFORM. I REPEAT THAT PLEDGE NOW.

DURING THE SEVENTEEN YEARS THAT HAVE PASSED SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A MORE DANGEROUS OR CLOSER CONFRONTATION OF THE MAJOR POWERS. AT A TIME WHEN THE DANGER TO WORLD PEACE WAS LESS IMMEDIATE, OR SO IT APPEARS BY COMPARISON, MY DISTINGUISHED PREDECESSOR SAID:

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"THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHARTER ARE, BY FAR, GREATER THAN THE ORGANIZATION IN WHICH THEY ARE EMBODIED, AND THE AIMS WHICH THEY ARE TO SAFEGUARD ARE HOLIER THAN THE POLICIES OF ANY SINGLE NATION OR PEOPLE." HE WENT ON TO SAY: "THE DISCRETION AND IMPARTIALITY... IMPOSED ON THE SECRETARY-GENERAL BY THE CHARACTER OF HIS IMMEDIATE TASK MAY NOT DEGENERATE INTO A POLICY OF EXPEDIENCY... A SECRETARY-GENERAL CANNOT SERVE ON ANY OTHER ASSUMPTION THAN THAT -- WITHIN THE NECESSARY LIMITS OF HUMAN FRAILTY AND HONEST DIFFERENCES OF OPINION -- ALL MEMBER NATIONS HONOUR THEIR PLEDGE TO OBSERVE ALL ARTICLES OF THE CHARTER..."

IT IS AFTER CONSIDERABLE DELIBERATION THAT I HAVE DECIDED TO SEND THE TWO MESSAGES TO WHICH I HAVE REFERRED EARLIER, AND LIKEWISE I HAVE DECIDED TO MAKE THIS BRIEF INTERVENTION TONIGHT BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL INCLUDING THE APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF CUBA.

I HOPE THAT AT THIS MOMENT, NOT ONLY IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER BUT IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE, GOOD SENSE AND UNDERSTANDING WILL BE PLACED ABOVE THE ANGER OF THE MOMENT OR THE PRIDE OF NATIONS. THE PATH OF NEGOTIATION AND COMPROMISE IS THE ONLY COURSE BY WHICH THE PEACE OF THE WORLD CAN BE SECURED AT THIS CRITICAL MOMENT.

MR. PRESIDENT, I THANK YOU.

STEVENSON

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Note: Advance copies to S/S-O.

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